

Boston Main Streets **IN BRIEF**

Building vibrant commercial districts



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"In Brief" is a bi-monthly newsletter of Boston Main Streets. It communicates important policy updates, district highlights, design, promotion, economic restructuring and organization technical tips, and event and media announcements to all involved in the Main Streets collaboration.

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Rededication Peabody Square Clock
St. Mark's Area Main Street

On Saturday, May 31, 2003, **St. Mark's Area Main Streets** celebrated with over 100 attendees from the community the rededication of the newly-renovated Peabody Square Clock.

Students Hit the Main Streets

Two teams of graduate students from MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP) completed plans for the **Egleston Square** and **Mission Hill Main Street** districts this spring. The plans, prepared for Revitalizing Urban Main Streets taught by Karl Seidman and Susan Silberberg, combine economic development and urban design elements into an overall revitalization strategy based on local stakeholder goals. Each team completed extensive local interviews, shopper surveys, market analysis, physical assessment, and met with the Main Street Board or committees to guide the formulation of their recommendations.

The **Egleston Square** plan proposed four initiatives to create a vibrant commercial center for the surrounding neighborhoods while attracting more shoppers from beyond Egleston Square:

- Strengthen existing businesses through façade improvement, cluster-based technical assistance and loans, and expanded marketing.
- A "Moving Streets" program to bring a farmer's market and pushcart vendors to vacant spaces and create destinations to draw shoppers and pedestrians through the district.
- Establish a local entertainment center by holding outdoor summertime movies, develop a family entertainment center and expand existing public art to create a district wide art walk.
- Create attractive gateways along Columbus Avenue and Boylston Street and strengthen the district's visibility at the Stonybrook T station by renaming the station Stonybrook/Egleston Square and installing way-finding signs.

For the **Mission Hill** plan, the students recommended revitalizing the Tremont Street corridor as a vibrant commercial street through the following initiatives:

- Establish Brigham Circle and Roxbury Crossing as pedestrian friendly development anchors. Brigham Circle plans include improving the intersection and its public spaces and attracting convenience retail that can benefit from new stores at One Brigham Circle. For Roxbury Crossing, students proposed improvements to the T-Station and pedestrian crossing and a mixed-use transit-oriented development project at several vacant parcels with office space, a neighborhood oriented restaurant, and larger retail stores.
- Streetscape improvements to make Tremont Street a more attractive and inviting pedestrian street, including additional façade renovations, landscaping to screen vacant sites, public art, improved window displays and relocating ground office users to new development within the district.
- Expand technical assistance and cooperation among Mission Hill businesses through a business reference service, regular business breakfasts, a mentoring program and cooperative purchasing and marketing.

The Art of Main Streets Management

Fun Facts From Our Economic Restructuring Committees

Understanding the market dynamics of your commercial district is a critical component to a successful main street effort. That means talking to shoppers, business owners, and realtors, inventorying your businesses and buildings, and analyzing your business mix. Over the past 18 months many of the economic restructuring committees have been doing just that with the assistance of BMS consultant Peg Barringer of OKM Associates. Here is a taste of what we have learned.

- The median weekly customer count for restaurants in **Centre/South** is 1,475.
- There is more than twice the amount of occupied retail space in the **West Roxbury** MS district than in the Cambridge Galleria Mall.
- Less than 60% of the customers in the **Mission Hill** district are neighborhood residents; the rest are students attending nearby colleges and employees that work in the area.
- Approximately 40,000 residents live and over 2,000 employees work within 1 mile of the **Brighton Main Street** district. This is a larger market area than many small downtowns across the state.
- An estimated two-thirds of the employees in the **Hyde/Jackson** Business district speak Spanish (one-third speak Spanish primarily and another third are bi-lingual).
- Business surveys conducted in **West Roxbury, Hyde Jackson, and Centre/South** all revealed a positive sales trend for the vast majority of businesses. More than one-quarter of the businesses reported an increase in sales of over 20% in the last 2-3 years.
- Over 2,000 customers in **Centre/South** “put themselves on the map” showing us where they live. We found out that JP shops JP. 70 – 80% of the customers were from the JP neighborhood. The next biggest customer draw was from **Roslindale**.
- The **Washington Gateway** district serves a very diverse neighborhood. It’s approximately one-third White, one-third African American and one-third Asian or other. In addition, 16% of the residents are Hispanic.
- Approximately 60% of the households in the **Four Corners** neighborhood have children compared to around 25% for the City of Boston overall. This has prompted **Four Corners** MS to actively pursue uses in the commercial district that would cater to families and children.
- The **St. Mark’s** Area Business District offers significant opportunity for new business investment. It’s served by 2 MBTA stations serving over 10,000 patrons per day. The 19,000 residents of the surrounding trade area have higher incomes and a greater homeownership rate than the City overall.

Happenings on Main Streets

- June 20, St. Mark’s Area Main Street Fundraiser, “*The City Sings!*” Call 617.825.3846 for info or www.smams.org
- June 21, Mission Hill Main Streets “Festival of Fire” Street Fair (rescheduled from 6/7). 2pm-8pm
www.missionhillmainstreets.org 617.427.7399
- Groovin' to Motown, July 18, 7-11pm at the Vietnamese American Community Center at 42 Charles Street
Dorchester Four Corners Main Street Call 617.287.1651
- July 24, Washington Gateway Main Streets – Historic Marker Preview Fundraising Event, 6:00pm – 8:00pm
Call 617.542.1234 or www.gatewaymainstreet.org for info
- July 14-19, Upham’s Corner Main Street, Upham’s Days
Call 617.265.0353 for info
- August 14, East Boston Main Street, “Boston Cityviews”,
Call 617.561.1044 or www.eastbostonmainstreets.org for info

Check out our Boston Main Streets show “**Making Your Neighborhood Work**” every Wednesday @ 2:00pm on BNN. Cable channel 9 or 22, See repeats of the show throughout the week on Wed @ 10:00pm, Thurs @ 6:00 am; Sat. @ 10:00 am; Mon. @ 1:30 am. The show can also be seen on RCN cable 15 or 16.

Making History on Main Streets

Washington Gateway Main Street once again is making its mark along the streets (and sidewalks) of Boston. On July 24, 2003 Washington Gateway Main Streets will host “Neck-Ties” a Historic Marker Preview Event Fundraiser at The Franklin and offer the public its first opportunity to view the six medallions and thirty kiosk panels that create a pictorial history of Washington Street.

Liken to the “newest Freedom Trail”, this walking story of the historic south end area of Boston is the result of more than 1000 hours of volunteer research and labor and has been two years in the making. Given the opportunity by the MBTA to participate in the street’s new look, the residents, neighbors and friends of Washington Gateway Main Street created 30 panels (6’x6’ and 6’x4’) and 6 metal medallions depicting the changing look, cultural and ethnic mix and commercial growth that has transpired since the early 1800’s.

Not only will the community have an opportunity to preview the panels that will be permanently displayed in the Silver Line kiosks from Herald Street to Melnea Cass Blvd., they also will be able to “exchange historic information with the experts and talk with contributing photographers”, according to Executive Director Sheila Grove. This Main Street event is being produced with the help of Gibson DomainDomain and other organizations that have been key players in the redevelopment of Washington Street. So come out, join Mayor Menino and the people of Washington Gateway and help make history come alive. Call 617.542.1234 for information.